

## **WHERE TO AFTER GREENTREE?**

*Andreas Theophanous*

*Professor of Political Economy*

*President of the Center for European and International Affairs of the University of Nicosia*

Despite the fact that there was a huge gap between the positions of the two sides in Cyprus, the UN Secretary General proceeded with his much anticipated Greentree invitations to the "two community leaders". As is often the case, several important personalities including the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, rushed to make statements urging the two sides to take advantage of yet another historic opportunity to arrive at a settlement. Subsequently, despite the obvious absence of progress, the UN Secretary General expressed his intention to pave the way toward a multilateral international conference in the latter part of April or early May.

It remains bewildering how the Greek Cypriot side has again found itself in this very difficult position: to be negotiating on the basis of a settlement plan that it had rejected before its accession to the EU. Indeed most people believe that the implementation of a plan along the lines currently being discussed will worsen the *status quo* for the Greek Cypriots. Moreover, the predicament is that again they are faced with a tight timetable and the prospect of arbitration in an international conference.

It is essential that we think outside the box. It is important to study the unsustainability of the Bosnian model to comprehend the results brought by inadequate and imposed agreements. It makes no sense to move forward with a process which could lead to serious and perhaps permanent setbacks.

It would be commendable if the two sides after years of negotiations were to find themselves within reach of an agreement. But unfortunately the harsh reality is that despite the generous concessions of President Christofias there are still fundamental divergences. This is acknowledged by all political parties including those which strongly supported Mr. Christofias in his drive for a solution.

Naturally there is much skepticism on the Greek Cypriot side as well as disappointment and pessimism. The mainstream perception is that the Turkish Cypriot positions are defined by Ankara which in its turn aspires to legitimize its strategic control of Cyprus.

Not surprisingly the deadlock was sustained during the negotiations at Greentree. The key divergences between the two sides relate to major aspects of the chapters of governance, property and territorial issues, as

well as perspectives on the economy and the settlers. On top of this, Turkey still insists on maintaining its guarantor rights over a member state of the EU in which it does not belong. Nevertheless the UN Secretary General seems determined to move forward in a conclusive manner.

The persistence of the stalemate is not a situation which is unique to the Cyprus conflict. Experience shows that it is necessary while we search for meaningful conflict resolution we must be ready to pursue successful conflict management. At the same time it is important to have a clear vision for the future, a road map on issues of procedures, tactics and, moreover, a well-defined strategy. The proposed international conference at this stage will not lead to a solution based on the will of the people. So it must be avoided.

The present Greek Cypriot leadership and the current political context did not eventually avoid a very difficult outcome at Greentree. To put it bluntly, it seems that there is a limit to what they can aim and achieve – a limit that is not satisfactory or acceptable. It is of utmost importance that at last Cyprus has a “narrative” and that it regains the moral high ground. Before any new Greentree therefore, it is imperative for a renewal of ideas, persons and methods to take place.